Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 22, 2024.

In attendance: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Member Zach Weaver Town Clerk & Treasurer Maggie McCormick, M'Lissa Dayton, Kathy Kennett, Charles Kennett, Cindy Cook, Jennifer Brace

Via Zoom: Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Groff

1. Howard called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

2. Additions/deletions to agenda:

Howard moved to put discussion of financial reporting into executive session. Zach seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

3. Approval of the minutes of the April 8, 2024 Selectboard Meeting

Howard moved to accept the minutes as written, Zach seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

4. Highway
    a. 2024 Paving Grant
        i. Maggie reported that the 2024 paving grant application has been submitted and accepted.
    b. New dump truck financing
        i. Maggie reported that per the last selectboard meeting, Community Bank has the dump truck loan in underwriting and loan documents should be available for the May 13 Selectboard meeting.

5. Emergency Management Coordinator's Report
    a. Otter Creek bridge repair is causing delays into and out of Vergennes.

b. The Local Emergency Management plan (LEMP) has been submitted to the state, but has not yet been posted to state website.
c. Bob has not had any reply for Addison County regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) on the status of the Town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), which was sent back from the state for updates. Completion of the LHMP is seriously overdue.
d. While flooding is not predicted, water levels everywhere are high.

6. Assistant Clerk
    a. Maggie reported that advertisements/posting were sent to the Addison Independent online and print, Front Porch Forum, and the Clerk listserv.
    b. One application has been received and another is expected.

7. Public comment
    a. Cathy Kennett:
        i. There was a big turnout for planning commission meeting to discuss the proposed Freepoint solar project adjacent to Slang and West Road.
        ii. No one there was in favor of the project.
        iii. Public Utilities Commission (PUC) having final say seems unfair.
        iv. Requests that the Selectboard acknowledge public sentiment.
        v. WCAX coverage did not show scenic view that this project will change.
        vi. Concern about the decommissioning of the project when its useful life is over.

Howard replied that the Panton Road solar field has a decommissioning requirement that all the panels be removed and the area returned to its pre-project state. If the Panton Road field were to be "renewed," he believes the developer there would have to go through the PUC approval process again.

    b. Reid Wells representing solar project wants to hold public sessions and then open house to address:
        i. He acknowledged view shed and wildlife concerns.
        ii. He asked if Panton Town Hall could be used for Freepoint-hosted meetings and was told yes.
    c. Cindy Cooke:
        i. She started a petition. Those she has asked for signatures have been either opposed or wanted more information.
        ii. PUC cites certain considerations including projects should not use viable farmland nor adversely impact wildlife and migratory birds.
        iii. Other locations in Vermont are more appropriate.
        iv. This project would encroach on her private property.

v. It is hard for the layperson to understand the scale of this project.
vi. Suggested an aerial illustration be done with drone photos or Google maps.

d. Jenn Brace
    i. Opposed because it's her whole view from her front door.
    ii. The scope is unfathomable.
    iii. Concern for wildlife: bears, northern harriers, bobcat, fisher cats.

e. Reid Wells
    i. Project was started in 2018 before Panton had a Town Energy Plan.
    ii. Panton Town Plan designates about 300 acres for solar. 37 MW capacity.
    iii. The developer also does not want to disrupt wildlife.
    iv. There are rigorous siting requirements for solar projects.

f. Cathy Kennett:
    i. Asked about the Selectboard's vote to hire an attorney.

Howard replied that the Town of Panton hired a legal expert on solar fields and that the developer's escrow fund to pay for Town legal fees is not contingent on the project being endorsed by the Selectboard or approval by the PUC. Attorney Leslie Cadwell was engaged due to referral from Ben Marks, the attorney who represented the Town for the Panton Road project.

8. Communications
    a. Homeward Bound contract
        i. Howard moved to contract with Homeward Bound at $450/year with $75/stray fee per dog. Zach seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.
    b. Vergennes Area Rescue Squad (VARS)
        i. Selectboard members from the five towns had a two-hour meeting with VARS on Wed, April 17.
            1. Discussed improving service
            2. Discussed one contract with the five towns as a single entity
            3. Private citizens as board members versus only VARS members currently
            4. Town representatives will review VARS finances
    c. ACRPC awarded Panton a $10,000 grant to work with Vergennes to hire a surveyor to settle Vergennes-Panton boundary issue.
        i. Howard will contact Adam Lougee about the grant contract.

9. Review/approval of accounts payable warrant, timesheets & payroll warrant
    a. Stipends 2354.91

b. Payroll 7788.38
c. AP 18637.33

Howard moved to approve the Accounts payable and payroll warrants. Zach seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

10. Executive session

Howard invited M'Lissa Dayton to the executive session and moved to enter executive session. Zach seconded. All in favor; the board entered executive session at 6:09 p.m.

Zach moved to exit executive session. Howard seconded. All in favor; the board returned to open session at 7:10 p.m.

11. Adjournment

Zach moved to adjourn. Howard seconded. All in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Maggie McCormick
Town Clerk & Treasurer